

The Costanoan practiced controlled burning of large areas of land each fall. In this way they controlled the growth of shrubby plants, kept down the accumulation of fire hazardous dead plant materials and left larger areas for seed-bearing annual plants. This also insured more forage for the use of browsing animals — the deer, elk and antelope.

Other large animals used for food were grizzly bears, mountain lions, sea lions and whales. Smaller animals included tree and ground squirrels, woodrats, mice, moles, rabbits, skunks and bobcats. Birds caught were geese, ducks, coots, mourning doves, pigeons, robins, quail and hawks. Only a few animals (eagles, buzzards, ravens, owls and frogs) were “taboo” and not eaten due to the mythology about them.

Many reptiles were eaten, also some insects, larvae of yellow jackets and honey bees, grasshoppers and caterpillars. Fish from the rivers and streams were caught in various ways including nets, fish traps, using bonfires at night, and poisons such as Amole. Along the coast many marine invertebrates were collected such as crabs, mussels, clams, abalone, octopus, etc.

Shell mounds (middens) and bedrock mortars are found within the reserve at several locations.

Compiled by Helen Lind and Chuck Bancroft

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The Natural World of the California Indians
Robert F. Heizer and Albert B. Elsasser
University of California Press 1980

Handbook of North American Indians Vol. 8
California Editor, Robert F. Heizer
Costanoan by Richard Levy
Smithsonian Institute

Common Edible and Useful Plants of the West
Muriel Sweet
Naturgraph Publishers 1976

A Manual of the Flowering Plants of California
Willis Linn Jepson
University of California Press 1957

Indian Uses

of some common plants found at Point Lobos State Reserve

Wild Rose *Rose californica*

A tea of tender root shoots was used for colds. The liquid from steeped leaves and rose hips was drunk for pains and colics. Cooked seeds were eaten for muscular pain.




the rose hip



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Amole or Soap Root

Chlorogalum pomeridianum

The fibrous bulb coat was used for making brushes. The bulb was used as a poultice, soap and glue, and after baking it was eaten. It was crushed and dropped in streams to stupefy fish.



Buckwheat

Eriogonum spp.

The seeds were sometimes eaten and a tea was made from the leaves for a headache cure and stomach pains. A tea from the leaves was used for bronchial ailments and as an eyewash.



Buttercups

Ranunculus spp.

The parched seeds made a meal to use in bread. The roots were boiled and eaten.



California Blackberry

Rubus ursinus

The berries were collected and eaten.



California Poppy

Eschscholzia californica

The leaves and flowers were eaten. Mashed stems and roots were used for medicine, especially toothache.



Poison Oak

Toxicodendron diversilobum

The dried black juice was used as a dye. Most Indians were not allergic to it



Stinging Nettles

Urtica spp.

The branches were used to strike parts affected by pain, and a hot poultice of the mashed leaves were used for rheumatism.



Toyon

Heteromeles arbutifolia

The berries were cooked and eaten.



Wild Lilac

Ceanothus spp.

The flowers and fruit were used as soap and the dry seeds were eaten. The roots yield a red dye.



Yerba Buena

Satureja douglasii

A tea was made from the leaves to relieve fever, indigestion and other internal disorders.



Coffeberry
Rhamnus californica

The berries and bark were effective laxatives.

Common Yarrow
Achillea millefolium

After harvesting and drying, a handful of dried material was boiled in water and drunk for run down conditions and indigestion. The leaves were used as a poultice for rashes. Tea made from the leaves was drunk as a medicine.

Common Manroot or Wild Cucumber
Marah fabaceus

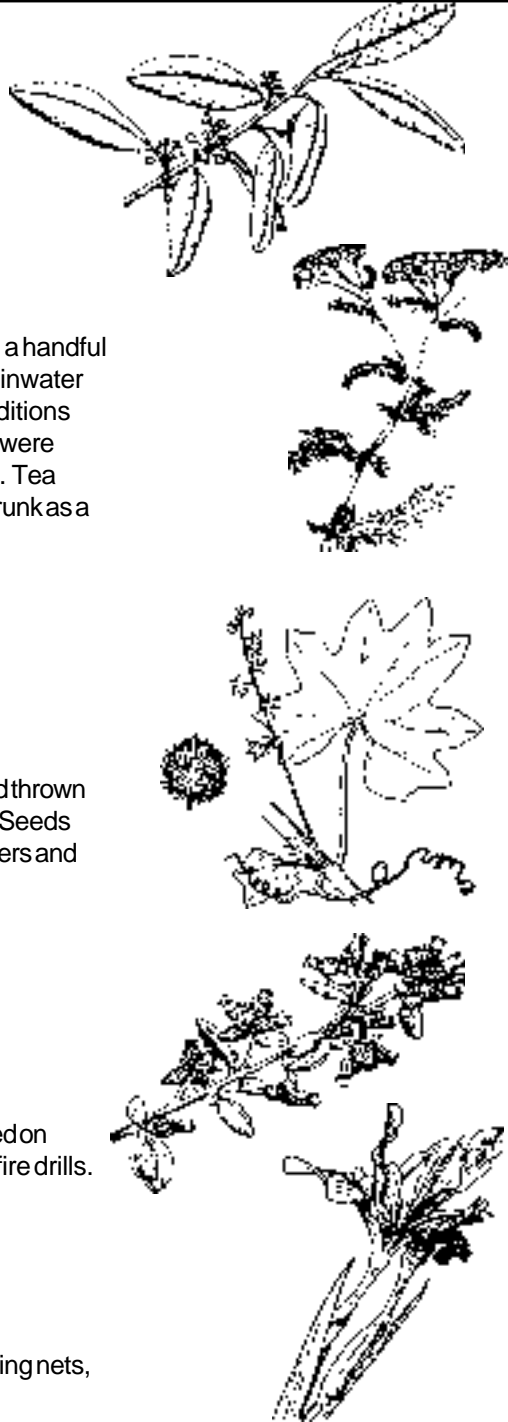
The leaves were crushed and thrown into streams to stupefy fish. Seeds were eaten for kidney disorders and also used for beads.

Coyote Brush, Dwarf Chapparral Broom
Baccharis pilularis

The crushed leaves were used on sores. Twigs were used as fire drills.

Douglas Iris
Iris douglasiana

The fibers were used in making nets, snares and twine.



Goldenrod
Solidago spp.

The leaves were boiled and used to wash wounds and ulcers. Then powdered leaves were sprinkled on these areas.

Indian Potato
Brodiaea spp.

Roasted bulbs were a favorite food. Bulb juice was used for an adhesive.

Loco Weed
Astragalus spp.

The plant was chewed to cure sore throats and to reduce swelling. The boiled root was used to wash eyelids and for toothaches. Seed pods were used as a spice.

Lupine
Lupinus spp.

Teas were made from seeds and used medicinally. Early in the spring leaves and flowers were stripped off and steamed, then eaten with acorn mush.

Miner's Lettuce
Claytonia perfoliata

The greens were eaten raw or cooked.



Monkey Flower

Mimulus spp.

Young stems and leaves were used as salad greens. Crushed leaves were placed on sores and were especially effective on rope burns.



Mugwort

Artemisia douglasiana

Seeds and shoots were used as food. Stems used in basketry. The bark, leaves and stems were used for medicine.



Nightshade

Solanum douglasii

Some of the nightshades are very poisonous, but non-poisonous ones were used as medicines.



Oak

Quercus agrifolia

After removing the bitter tannin from the acorns, they were ground and used in soup, mush and bread. Sometimes acorn meal was allowed to accumulate mold, kept in a damp place and used to heal boils and sores. The bark was also used as a medicine.



Pine

Pinus radiata

Pine seeds (nuts) were obtained from the cones in various ways. They were roasted or just eaten as any nut. Pitch from the tree was used as an adhesive and sealant.



Canyon Gooseberry

Ribes menziesii

The fruit was collected and eaten.



California Sagebrush

Artemisia californica

The seeds were eaten and a tea made from the leaves to help ease the pain of rheumatism.



Checker Bloom

Sidalcea malvaeflora

The leaves were used for food and also used as a poultice on stings, thorns and splinters.



Coastal Gum Plant

Grindelia stricta var. platyphylla

A tea was made by boiling the roots and used for liver ailments. A decoction of leaves was made for running sores and also for toothache, throat and lung trouble.



Coast Tarweed

Madiagracilis

The plant was gathered, ground into a fine meal, roasted, and eaten. The scalded seeds were used in soap making. The flowering tops were a remedy for poison oak.

